TRANSCULTURAL HUMANIST MANAGEMENT EDUCATION FOR FUTURE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE.

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ABSTRACT

The globalization of neoliberal economics happened with the hegemonic expansion of a global English American culture which allowed international management educational institutions as well as Western corporations to impose monolithically ethics and esthetical values at their mercy in a free based market economy. Culture, as well as language, has always been a very powerful tool for colonization since the XIXth century. English American global culture has been imposed upon cultural and linguistic diversity in many academic, business and scientific fields to the point that affirmative action is a must in a university research environment mostly dominated by English. As a consequence, a hybrid language has been created by non-native speakers when they incorporate into English grammar their mental and sensorial perception and understandings.

This paper will focus on the implementation in business teaching education at the university level of cross-cultural humanist training for responsible leaders. This research would like to highlight the importance of emerging cultures in our global society and the need to incorporate its polyphonic cultural views into management practices. Transcultural humanism (TH) questions Eurocentrism and Western thinking as the main ground theory for business education. The rising responsible sustainable business environment underlines the need for new approaches in business education. The purpose of this paper is to show how relevant is Transcultural humanism, taught from a holistic perspective, in educational business learning contexts for exchanging ideas and perspectives in the emergence of a responsible global world. The paper will highlight the contribution of postcolonial social thinkers, economist, activists and creative responsible leaders in the learning practices of our education business institutions.

Key words: *transcultural management, management education, postcolonial perspectives, responsible leaders, business teaching education*

The globalization of neoliberal economics happened with the hegemonic expansion of a language and a culture, English American, which allowed Western corporations to grow creating, developing and controlling the market economy at their mercy. Western languages and cultures, as it happened with Spanish, French and English Empires has always been a very powerful tool for colonization. Becoming a "lingua franca", English

American has been imposed upon cultural and linguistic diversity in many academic and scientific fields, especially in management education. We live today the domination of English in our research environment also, where a non-English speaking population (the majority of the planet) struggles to get published while Anglo-Saxon scholars have easy access to publication journals and academic business educational positions, in many cases because of their mastery of the language more than anything else. Affirmative action for "language diversity" has not yet been implemented in research and in educational business environments. On the other hand, English has become the main language tool for learning in many international universities. A hybrid language has been created by non-native speakers when they incorporate into English grammar their mental and sensorial perception and understandings, in many cases a peculiar way of thinking which differs from the linear, Cartesian and very structured English used by native speakers. The education of responsible transcultural managers for open environments and organizations demands a multilingual and a postcolonial approach to the study of languages and cultures to enlarge a responsible caring vision about our world (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2011).

European business universities are dominated by the use of the native(s) language(s) of the country and English. Many educational organizations think that using English gives their environment an open and culturally diverse "touch" to their participants, underestimating the importance of a third and even a fourth language and culture in the curriculum as a way to overcome linguistic "distance" (Dumitriu & Capdevila, 2012). Many educational business institutions and corporations have a qualified staff capable of doing their work in many different languages. However, the priority is given to English as well as the language spoken in the territory where these organizations operate. In many occasions there is a kind of prejudice to see foreigners using their language in a mono-linguistic environment with few people capable of switching into English exclusively. This is a very poor understanding of what should be living in a transcultural diverse global environment open for different views and expectations as

> the role of transversal humanist teaching is to present the particularities of each culture and their differences in regards to others. For that purpose, languages as well as explicit and implicit cultural contexts ought to be deconstructed to attain cross cultural approaches and behaviors. If culture represents a system of shared values transmitted from generations to generations, it is then composed of subjective and collective knowledge (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2015: 2).

The tendency still very present in our educational and business institutions is discriminating other cultures, many times considered inferior, to the dominating languages and Western cultures. The impression is that apart

from the native language and culture used in education and business, there is only another one: English language and Anglo-Saxon culture. This is the case of ASEAN, where in January 2015 10 countries merged in an economic union using English as a tool for communication among national cultures from South East Asia.

In French there is a difference made between globalization and "worldisation" ("mondialisation"). Some intellectuals like Claude Hagège (*Combat pour le français*, 2006) and media groups (*Le Monde diplomatique*) consider globalization as a phase in the disappearance of national identities and the collapse of borders across countries in our global village as Marshall McLuhan pointed out 50 years ago in *Understanding Media*. The world, following the Canadian scholar, will be built following the neoliberal cultural model producing a vast amount of content in English (values, norms, institutions, objects, information and so on). This will create a new kind of totalitarian « invisible » Global State where English will impose their ethic and aesthetic values over other languages and cultures through technology and mass media. This has been studied by committed intellectuals like Ignacio Ramonet (former director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*) in *The Tyranny of Communication* (*La Tyrannie de la communication*) referring to the Americanization and the development of a mass culture since 1930's as a global culture today, a culture very easily understood (low context culture) and fast (the « speed-culture » announced by Paul Virilio) by our global citizens and characterized by the consumption of everything and the consequent destruction of our natural environment in a kind of "macdonaldisation" of society (as George Rifter pointed out more than 25 years ago). However, before this possible final phase of humanity understood in its diversity, European countries like France reacted putting forward the importance of "cultural exception" and Italy with the "slow food movement" with the emergence at the beginning of the XXIst century of the Global Compact and for business education of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), a universal chart of rights and obligations for business universities which invites to open up the curriculum to the silent voices of social thinkers and humanist from all over the world. This is what we called in previous work Responsible Global Humanism (RGH), a larger concept from the reductionist view eurocentrism monopolized thinking and business practices since the French Encyclopedia in late XVIII:

> Responsible Global Humanism (RGH) appears then as an alternative way to foresee humanities from a larger scope as the contribution and findings of scholars and practitioners from emerging countries is becoming more relevant for our global economy. The changes that our business schools are experimenting today are the result of the need to learn from silent and dissident voices that can help the business community to better understand

the happenings and complexities of our diverse economic, cultural, political, social and economic environments (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2015: 124).

From a positive and constructive view, English language has been used as a tool for communication among different linguistic communities unable to understand each other because of the difficulties to learn the other`s language. It is the case today of the already mentioned ASEAN. English becomes therefore a tool for cultural exchanges despite the very little knowledge people using it could have about the Anglo-Saxon way of thinking and communicating. In business education is it important to pay attention to the interpretation of cross-cultural meaning as crucial to understand the intentions of second language English speakers as the language used for interaction do not always respond to the demands and needs of the people employing it. The overuse of English language by other cultural communities creates in international management education a hybrid language as the original syntactic structure evolve according to the way of thinking and the formal characteristics of the other languages and cultures used by non-English speakers (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2015). Concepts like profit, performance, productivity, growth and so on have to be revisited according to the cultural dimensions of each national, corporate and professional culture. This is also obvious when it relates to scientific papers adapted to the linear and Cartesian structure of English language and culture in relation to other cultures which can be more systemic, emotional and less pragmatic in relation to the meaning carried by the words employed. The best example is to compare an English paper or thesis dissertation written by an Italian or a Spanish scholar, where each paragraph carries a very large amount of ideas and running sentences to a paper written by a Norwegian or Swedish scholar, easier to adapt to the formal and neutral standards of what English language expects from its users. Subjectivity and emotion is not accepted as scientific scholarly papers demand a more objective and rational approach to the subject presented and discussed. In French language there is a tendency to say that an oral presentation is well thought and structured as it is also "squarely" well done ("pensée bien structuré" or "carrément bien"[4]). This implies also that is not "rounded", meaning feminine, emotional, disordered, and intuitive. From this perspective it is important to consider different elements in management transcultural education that come into play with the use of English as a second language from cultures that do not want to be placed in a position of cultural domination (as the native speakers could be seen as the dominant ruling class): First, semantic

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[4] Literal translation: Thinking well structured. Squarely well.

hybridity (SH); second, cross-cultural linguistic performance (CCLP); third, transcultural adaptation (TA). This paper would like to highlight the importance of our very large language environment which gives cultural diversity a global social meaning as confronts the imposition of a language or a culture over others by political, economic, cultural and psychological factors. The best example is our global culture and the music industry which is overwhelmed by Anglo-Saxon language. The same could be said about the audiovisual (cinema and television) industry. There are several tools to cross-cultural understand the meaning and functions of a language used as a tool for global communication. One of them is sociolinguistics, a discipline that tries to understand the complexities of cross-cultural multi language used in business international environments. For this purpose global humanism incorporating humanities and social sciences is today a need in the training and education of international responsible managers and negotiators.

Cultural domination comes when the colonizing culture does not take the specificities of the colonized culture as the objects do not have the same mental value in different languages. This is important to bear in mind for business education. For instance, the word "imagination" poses some problems from this perspective as the mental construct of something or someone does not have to be always an image, but a sound, a smell, a texture, a taste or a mixture of all of them. The dominating and destructive effects of Facebook for instance over the globally diverse cultural "mental perception" of a word has not been studied yet but we can see already the changing patterns towards physically passive isolated and individualistic behavior of many collectivists cultures[5]. In non-Western Cultures many objects refer to sacred principles related to Nature or to the invisible, aspects today highlighted in sustainable management education. This is the case of the tam-tam or percussion instruments which have spiritual value as well as are carriers of information that is very important for African communities. Once these sacred tools are replaced by Western objects or technologies such as smartphones, these "new things" acquire values

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[5] On December 27th 2014 one of the authors of this paper assisted in Cádiz, Spain, at a Christmas Carols Flamenco Concert at Peña La Perla, beside the Cathedral, in the old quartier. The south of Spain is mostly collectivists as people tend to speak loud and relentlessly at the same time when they are together. During the intermission most of the people sitting, about 4 or 5 around many tables before the stage, did not talk to each other. Most of them, people from 20 to 70 years old (flamenco is loved by all ages), were very busy looking at their smartphones. This lasted until the end of the intermission. This an example of how technology imposes individualistic behaviour and cultural domination among collectivists cultures as it creates a kind of addiction and dependency.

which go beyond their specific use as tools for communication. They become "spiritual" value objects as the percussions instruments before. Many professors have been struggling in business schools as the students pay more attention during classes through their technological gadgets to the happenings in their Facebook or twitter accounts than to the lectures and seminars given by the expertise. The same effect happens to brands and education. The worshipping of branding is something Western cultures do not understand but their devastating effect over these cultures is as destructive as colonizing languages were in relation to the aboriginal ones, as well as to the cultures they encountered [6]. No matter the language chosen in cross-cultural communication, a word is never encoded the same way by second language producers as it is by native speakers. Most of the time there are a lot of misunderstandings due to wrong interpretations as the result of lack of knowledge of cultural contexts. Cross-cultural study of words, objects and concepts present when verbal language is employed are very relevant aspects people should consider in international negotiation, cross-cultural management practices and so on. It is also necessary to notice that in cross-cultural communication among speakers from different cultures and languages, each speaker keeps his/her own world view. It does not matter how high the linguistic competence of a specific speaker is in a foreign language. Speakers have to switch constantly between their original local knowledge to global knowledge (Dupuis, 2011) in a business environment with multicultural managers as a requirement for open organizations (Brannen, 2010). The need to create new intercultural management models in global teams (Has, 2012) forces individuals to negotiate word views as a sine-qua-non condition in cross-cultural encounters where speakers do not share most of the time the same aesthetic and ethical values. In cross-cultural learning speakers have to consider the role of verbal language as in Japanese culture, as well as in many Asian cultures, speakers are more "allocentric" than Westerners, being more concerned with the interests of others more than one's own. Asians are generally community-minded and the use of second person pronouns certifies this. Western speakers tend to be more "egocentric", self-centered and less concerned about the others and the environment. The emerging ecological and green corporate practices around the world

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[6] One of the authors of this paper found out in poor Mindanao, Philippines, how people were trying to sell to "organ brokers" their kidneys for about 300 euros to get the last version of the Apple smart phone. Technology has gone too far in certain cultures where the sacred is related to physical objects as a kind of animist behavior.

are changing fixed patterns about cultural behavior and cross-cultural communication.

The final conclusions of this critical study go to the possibility in our XXIst century of creating hybrid languages and cultures in management education, resulting from the exchange and "contamination" of foreign cultures in our global multilingual planet. From this world perspective the use of language will be less determined by social class and professional status and more by the need to communicate in open and decentered environments. *The Clash of Civilisations* (Samuel Huntington) and the *End of History* (Francis Fukuyama) highlighted by conservative American neoliberal scholars at the end of the XXth century will not happen if future responsible leaders and business educators embrace cultural differences as an asset for a more complex and elaborate world view produced by a community of globally responsible citizens. Wade Davis in his book *Light at the Edge of the World* (2007) created a concept that is very much appropriated for this paper: the "Ethnosphere". This refers to the diversity of human cultures. From this view, languages and cultures are much more than just a set of grammatical rules, ethical and aesthetical values but the result of different world views through norms, rituals, ecological and sacred knowledge (such as eco-spirituality), belief systems and so on. From a sustainable, dialogical and responsible systems thinking perspective and a holistic / integral view (Capra, 1983. Wilber, 2000), cultures and languages interact and adapt to changing environments and contexts. Management education has the responsibility of showing the radical changes occurred in the las decades in our business world where instead of having a monolithical culture or a dominating civilization our planet today is a dynamic web of relationships, a polyphony of voices, a "rhizome"[7] of languages and cultures in a permanent non-linear dialogue, change and exchange adapting to each other without a fixed point of reference. Instead of a world of dualistic categories and binary oppositions our business educational environments invite "difference" as the basic tool to understand the very essence of nature and the universe. The well-known opposition between highly developed civilizations, mostly of European origin, and barbarian "underdeveloped" ethnic cultures becomes obsolete from a postcolonial understanding of languages and cultures. Transcultural[8]

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[7] Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1980. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 2004. Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 2 vols. 1972-1980. Trans. of *Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

[8] Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano entre el tabaco y el azúcar.* La Habana: Jesús Montero, 1940.

adaptation can be a tool for cross-cultural learning and communication as well as for the creation of a globally responsible humanism for the education of future managers (Rabassó & Rabassó, 2014) in European business schools less worried about making money and much more concern about education. As we mentioned in a paper published in 2014 at the *Journal of Global Responsibility*, "How European Business Schools Can Find Their Way",

> It is now up to European Business Schools to decide whether they want to be part of the solution to make the world a place where market economy serves human fundamental rights and needs, or whether they choose to be part of the drive which amplifies human precariousness, inequality and environmental problems, driving our planet to the brink of an abyss (Rabassó & Rabassó & Sionneau, 2014:236).

Transcultural humanist management education can be an inspiring way for global responsibility in many business educational institutions with the creation of multidisciplinary departments and research projects with a teaching staff coming from different areas of expertise and geopolitical backgrounds. The contribution of cross-cultural and "egalitarian"- non-hierarchical- environments towards "green" business education will help management universities and schools for the encountering of a plurality of third hybrid humanist cultures as the result of the linguistic and cultural exchange of students, educators and managers, all committed for a better sustainable and responsible world.

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